

# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

## AUBURN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1954 - 1994

Julian L. Dusi and Rosemary D. Dusi

Christmas bird counts have been made in Auburn, Alabama since 1954 (Dusi 1991, *Alabama Birdlife* 38(1)). The number of participants with good birding abilities has always been small. Often just one party did the count. In 1993 and 1994, a greater number of participants (23 in 1993 and 12 in 1994) and counting parties (34) have resulted in a difference of the total species numbers (Table 1); 79 in both 1993 and 1994, ranging from 42-76 in 1954 - 1990.

The habitats of the area have changed greatly in the past 40 years. In 1954, the area was rural, except for the small cities of Auburn and Opelika and the agricultural experiment area of Auburn University. Both cities have now grown together and have many suburbs. The University has expanded and two large golf courses (Auburn Links at Mill Creek and the Robert Trent Jones Grade National Golf Club) have created large areas of artificial openings, plantings and water areas, easily counted from a golf cart. Agricultural land use has changed from cultivated field crops to pastures, with much land in pine trees (*Pinus* sp.). The white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*, which graze on the undergrowth of woodlands and remove bird habitat, have increased from rare to abundant. Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) have increased from being absent to common.

The Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) and Bachman's Sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*) no longer have suitable habitat. Waterfowl have

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decreased. The blackbird roost, present in the 1950's and 1960's, is no longer extant. Many of the open field and edge species, like sparrows and the Bobwhite (Colinus virginianus) have decreased in areas where tree farming has replaced tilled fields. These changes have occurred and are expected on our counts. Fielding more parties, counting birds on more of the count area, has provided the higher counts of 1993 and 1994.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Too many participants to list have made the counts over the years. For 1993 and 1994 the participants were: Fred Bassett, Barbara Beals, Ashley Belcher, Jason Belcher, Jim Cane, Linda Cane, Julian Dusi, Rosemary Dusi, Virginia Ernst, Jane Herring, Geoffrey Hill, Margaret Holler, Nick Holler, Tommy King, Chet Roe, Jane Rushin, Jane Thomas and Lorna West.

TABLE 1. TOTALS OF COUNTS FOR 1993, 1994, AND 1954 -1990, AUBURN, ALABAMA <sup>1</sup>			
SPECIES	1993	1994	1954-1990
Horned Grebe <u>Podiceps auritus</u>	0	1	1
Pied-billed Grebe <u>Podilymbus podiceps</u>	18	25	42
Double-crested Cormorant <u>Phalacrocorax auritus</u>	0	3	1
Great Blue Heron <u>Ardea herodias</u>	40	21	72
Great Egret <u>Casmerodius albus</u>	1	1	1
Canada Goose <u>Branta canadensis</u>	1	1	0
Mallard <u>Anas platyrhynchos</u>	45	21	5
Black Duck <u>Anas rubripes</u>	0	0	2
Gadwall <u>Anas strepera</u>	0	0	1

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Table 1 - Continued

Green-winged Teal <u>Anas crecca</u>	7	0	0
Northern Shoveler <u>Anas clypeata</u>	0	0	1
Wood Duck <u>Aix sponsa</u>	15	2	25
Redhead <u>Aythya americana</u>	0	0	3
Ring-necked Duck <u>Aythya collaris</u>	2	5	149
Canvasback <u>Aythya valisineria</u>	0	0	1
Lesser Scaup <u>Aythya affinis</u>	0	0	31
Common Goldeneye <u>Bucephala clangula</u>	0	0	3
Bufflehead <u>Bucephala albeola</u>	0	1	10
Ruddy Duck <u>Oxyura jamaicensis</u>	2	1	1
Hooded Merganser <u>Lophodytes cucullatus</u>	10	11	10
Common Merganser <u>Mergus merganser</u>	0	0	1
Turkey Vulture <u>Cathartes aura</u>	43	30	178
Black Vulture <u>Coragyps atratus</u>	56	104	458
Sharp-shinned Hawk <u>Accipiter striatus</u>	2	2	4
Cooper's Hawk <u>Accipiter cooperii</u>	1	0	7
Red-tailed Hawk <u>Buteo jamaicensis</u>	21	9	72
Red-shouldered Hawk <u>Buteo lineatus</u>	03	04	23
Broad-winged Hawk <u>Buteo platypterus</u>	0	0	1
Northern Harrier <u>Circus cyaneus</u>	0	1	11
Merlin <u>Falco columbarius</u>	0	0	1
American Kestrel <u>Falco sparverius</u>	9	13	47
Bobwhite	25	26	265
Turkey	12	5	2

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Table 1 - Continued

Sandhill Crane <u>Grus canadensis</u>	0	0	2
Sora <u>Porzana carolina</u>	0	0	1
King Rail <u>Rallus elegans</u>	0	1	0
American Coot <u>Fulica americana</u>	0	2	63
Killdeer <u>Charadrius vociferus</u>	135	28	362
American Woodcock <u>Scolopax minor</u>	0	2	11
Common Snipe <u>Gallinago gallinago</u>	8	0	114
Spotted Sandpiper <u>Actitis macularia</u>	0	0	1
Least Sandpiper <u>Calidris minutilla</u>	1	0	12
Ring-billed Gull <u>Larus delawarensis</u>	0	13	0
Rock Dove <u>Columba livia</u>	577	775	685
Mourning Dove <u>Zenaida macroura</u>	87	138	865
Common Ground Dove <u>Columbina passerina</u>	0	0	2
Barn Owl <u>Tyto alba</u>	0	0	1
Screech Owl <u>Otus asio</u>	3	1	6
Great Horned Owl <u>Bubo virginianus</u>	2	1	6
Barred Owl <u>Strix varia</u>	0	0	8
Belted Kingfisher <u>Ceryle alcyon</u>	18	9	69
Common Flicker <u>Colaptes auratus</u>	11	16	206
Pileated Woodpecker <u>Dryocopus pileatus</u>	16	5	28
Red-bellied Woodpecker <u>Melanerpes carolinus</u>	24	25	174
Red-headed Woodpecker <u>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</u>	2	0	19

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Table 1 - Continued

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <u>Sphyrapicus varius</u>	14	3	63
Hairy Woodpecker <u>Picoides villosus</u>	1	2	25
Downy Woodpecker <u>Picoides pubescens</u>	7	10	116
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	0	0	1
Eastern Phoebe <u>Sayornis phoebe</u>	20	5	87
Olive-sided Flycatcher <u>Contopus borealis</u>	0	0	1
Blue Jay <u>Cyanocitta cristata</u>	56	57	592
American Crow <u>Corvus brachyrhynchos</u>	206	240	441
Fish Crow <u>Corvus ossifragus</u>	1	0	0
Carolina Chickadee <u>Parus carolinensis</u>	47	27	354
Tufted Titmouse <u>Parus bicolor</u>	35	28	225
White-breasted Nuthatch <u>Sitta carolinensis</u>	0	0	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch <u>Sitta canadensis</u>	0	0	3
Brown-headed Nuthatch <u>Sitta pusilla</u>	15	10	264
Brown Creeper <u>Certhia americana</u>	0	0	34
House Wren <u>Troglodytes aedon</u>	3	1	4
Winter Wren <u>Troglodytes troglodytes</u>	1	0	34
Carolina Wren <u>Thryothorus ludvicianus</u>	20	34	239
Marsh Wren <u>Cistothorus palustris</u>	0	1	1
Mockingbird <u>Mimus polyglottos</u>	35	41	330
Gray Catbird <u>Dumetella carolinensis</u>	0	1	2
Brown Thrasher <u>Toxostoma rufum</u>	10	7	161
American Robin <u>Turdus migratorius</u>	1875	16	1627

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Table 1 - Continued

Hermit Thrush <u>Catharus guttatus</u>	9	5	51
Veery <u>Catharus fuscescens</u>	0	0	1
Eastern Bluebird <u>Sialia sialis</u>	54	83	288
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher <u>Polioptila caerulea</u>	3	0	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet <u>Regulus satrapa</u>	16	4	153
Ruby-crowned Kinglet <u>Regulus calendula</u>	53	30	459
Water Pipit <u>Anthus spinoletta</u>	20	1	208
Cedar Waxwing <u>Bombycilla cedrorum</u>	239	269	857
Loggerhead Shrike <u>Lanius ludovicianus</u>	11	15	78
Starling <u>Sturnus vulgaris</u>	4076	610	1036K
White-eyed Vireo <u>Vireo griseus</u>	0	0	1
Solitary Vireo <u>Vireo solitarius</u>	0	4	3
Orange-crowned Warbler <u>Vermivora celata</u>	0	0	6
Yellow-rumped Warbler <u>Dendroica coronata</u>	80	172	427
Pine Warbler <u>Dendroica pinus</u>	22	120	174
Palm Warbler <u>Dendroica palmarum</u>	1	0	0
Common Yellowthroat <u>Geothlypis trichas</u>	0	1	15
House Sparrow <u>Passer domesticus</u>	2	36	482
Eastern Meadowlark <u>Sturnella magna</u>	257	98	1049
Red-winged Blackbird <u>Agelaius phoeniceus</u>	5011	405	947K
Common Grackle <u>Quiscalus quiscula</u>	10.5K	156	674.5K
Brown-headed Cowbird <u>Molothrus ater</u>	600	10	849.5K
Northern Cardinal <u>Cardinalis cardinalis</u>	51	70	801

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Table 1 - Continued

Purple Finch <u>Carpodacus purpureus</u>	2	1	142
House Finch <u>Carpodacus mexicanus</u>	45	142	42
Pine Siskin <u>Carduelis pinus</u>	2	0	0
American Goldfinch <u>Carduelis tristis</u>	90	47	681
Rufous-sided Towhee <u>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</u>	14	14	543
Savannah Sparrow <u>Passerculus sandwichensis</u>	196	30	260
Vesper Sparrow <u>Pooecetes gramineus</u>	33	2	33
Bachman's Sparrow	0	0	2
Dark-eyed Junco <u>Junco hyemalis</u>	57	3	979
Chipping Sparrow <u>Spizella passerina</u>	5	59	1066
Field Sparrow <u>Spizella pusilla</u>	78	47	872
White-throated Sparrow <u>Zonotrichia albicollis</u>	76	90	1136
Fox Sparrow <u>Passerella iliaca</u>	2	0	0
Swamp Sparrow <u>Melospiza georgiana</u>	23	22	218
Song Sparrow <u>Melospiza melodia</u>	59	87	623
<b>TOTALS</b>	79	79	106 (42 - 76)

<sup>1</sup> K = thousands

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